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Debt ceiling impasse: McCarthy presses Biden to negotiate



Page 2

From left, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., and Sen. Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., talk to reporters about the Joint Economic Committee Report on the Republican Party's debt limit position, at the Capitol in Washington, March 23, 2023. Associated Press

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Page 9

Prime Minister Evelyn Wever-Croes: "Our coalition is stronger than ever"



Page 7

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Debt ceiling impasse: McCarthy presses Biden to negotiate

From Front

By **KEVIN FREKING**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., said Tuesday he's increasingly concerned about President Joe Biden's unwillingness to negotiate on lifting the nation's borrowing authority, saying in a letter to the president that the White House position could "hold dire ramifications for the entire nation."

Rather than open direct talks on the debt ceiling, which the Democrats agree must be raised, Biden and his party's lawmakers are challenging Republicans to publicly present their own budget proposals — something McCarthy has so far declined to do. For now, the Treasury Department has resorted to "extraordinary measures" to avoid default on the nation's \$31.4 trillion borrowing authority. But those measures will run out — and put the U.S. at risk of being unable to pay all of its bills — possibly as early as June.

The White House has emphasized that Biden is not willing to entertain proposed cuts in programs simply in exchange for lifting the debt limit. But McCarthy and Republicans are insisting he must for debt ceiling legislation to move ahead. The two sides are on a slow-motion collision course that could have negative implications for the economy in the months ahead.

"Nearly two month ago, you and I sat down to discuss a path forward on the debt limit," McCarthy wrote. "Since that time, however, you and your team have been completely missing in action on any meaningful follow-up to this rapidly approaching deadline."

He also told Biden, "Simply put: You are on the clock. It's time to drop the partisanship, roll up our sleeves, and find common ground on this urgent challenge. Please have your team reach out to mine by the end of this week to set a date for our next meeting." Show your plans, the White



Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., joined at right by Rep. Virginia Foxx, R-N.C., chair of the House Education Committee, talks to reporters after the House narrowly passed the "Parents' Bill of Rights Act," at the Capitol in Washington, March 24, 2023.

Associated Press

House responds, believing that many voters would not look favorably on some of the proposals Republicans are urging.

"It's time for Republicans to stop playing games, pass a clean debt ceiling bill, and quit threatening our economic recovery," said White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre. "The president welcomes a separate conversation about our nation's fiscal future."

So far, the House Freedom Caucus, which includes many of the House's most conservative members, has put forward a blueprint, which includes returning to fiscal year 2022 spending levels and allowing for 1% annual growth after that for the next 10 years. The plan also includes rolling back an estimated \$400 billion in Biden's student loan relief and clawing back all unspent COVID-19 funds.

The White House has seized on those Freedom Caucus proposals, saying they would lead to draconian cuts that would endanger Americans' safety, such as cutting federal support for local law enforcement, scaling back rail safety inspections and jeopardizing safety at U.S. airports while increasing wait times at TSA security check points. Republicans in the House say voters gave them a mandate to reduce future deficits and put the country on firmer financial footing for coming decades. They are portraying the White House as inviting the standoff by refusing to negotiate.

"The one thing that is not going to be helpful is Washington playing this silly game of waiting to the last minute to do something," said Rep. Byron Donalds, R-Fla. "And so I think what the speaker is doing is leading the country. Our hope is that the president joins us in that work."

But Democrats believe the pressure will continue to

build on Republicans to allow for a clean debt ceiling increase — with no spending-cut trade-offs — and then lawmakers from the two parties can negotiate overall levels for federal agencies in spending bills for the coming fiscal year. The failures of Silicon Valley Bank in California and Signature Bank in New York have also added to concerns about how the threat of a default could impact the economy.

McCarthy listed several prospects for reducing federal spending in his letter to Biden. Among them:

- Reducing "excessive non-defense" spending to "pre-inflationary levels" and limiting growth in future years.
- Reclaiming unspent COVID funds that he says have sat dormant for more than two years.
- Strengthening work requirements for people without dependents who receive federal assistance.
- Enacting policies to lower energy costs and secure the U.S.-Mexico border.

McCarthy also briefed House Republicans on the letter during a closed-door meeting Tuesday, according to a person familiar with the private session and granted anonymity to discuss it. McCarthy told his colleagues that Biden misled them about the budget negotiations, which have essentially stalled since their first meeting Feb. 1, the person said.

Rep. Pete Aguilar, D-Calif., disparaged McCarthy's letter as consisting only of bullet points and called on House Republicans to both produce a budget and raise the debt limit, noting Congress lifted the ceiling three times during Donald Trump's presidency. "The full faith and credit of the United States government should not be in question," Aguilar said. "The United States pays its bills."

Senate Republicans have said it will be up to the administration and House Republicans to work out an agreement on the debt ceiling. □

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AP sources: Judge rules Pence must testify before grand jury

By JILL COLVIN and ERIC TUCKER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge has ruled that former Vice President Mike Pence will have to testify before a grand jury in the Justice Department's investigation into efforts by former President Donald Trump and his allies to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

That's according to two people familiar with the decision, who spoke Tuesday on condition of anonymity because it remains under seal.

The people said, however, that Pence would not have to answer questions about his actions on Jan. 6, 2021, when a mob of Trump's supporters stormed the Capitol building as Pence was presiding over a joint session of Congress to certify Democrat Joe Biden's victory. But he would have to testify about any potential illegal acts committed by the former president, one of the people said.

Pence and his attorneys had cited constitutional grounds in challenging the grand jury's subpoena. They argued that, because he was serving in his capacity as president of the Senate that day, he was protected from being forced to testify under the Constitution's "speech or debate" clause, which is intended to protect members of Congress from questioning about official legislative acts.

Trump's lawyers had also objected to Pence complying, citing executive privilege.

A Trump spokesman criticized the decision in a statement, accusing the Justice Department of "continuously stepping far outside the standard norms in attempting to destroy the long accepted, long held, constitutionally based standards of attorney-client privilege and executive privilege."

"There is no factual or legal basis or substance to any case against President Trump," they added, but did not respond to ques-

tions about how Trump's legal team might respond. Pence's team is evaluating whether it will appeal.

The sealed ruling from U.S. District Judge James "Jeb" Boasberg sets up the unprecedented scenario of a former vice president being compelled to give potentially damaging testimony against the president he once served. And it comes as Pence has been inching closer to announcing a run for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination — a decision that would put him in direct competition with his former boss.

Pence was subpoenaed earlier this year to appear before the grand jury in Washington investigating election interference. In public appearances, he has cast the that action as unconstitutional and unprecedented and said he would pursue the matter as far as the Supreme Court. Still, he told ABC's "This Week" that he might be open to testifying about matters not directly related to his congressional role.

"I've actually never asserted that other matters unrelated to January 6 would otherwise be protected by speech and debate," he told the network. "We're gonna make that case, but I promise you we'll respect the decisions of the court."

A Justice Department special counsel, Jack Smith, is investigating attempts by Trump and his allies to overturn Biden's win in the 2020 presidential election to keep Trump in the White House. Multiple Trump aides have already appeared before the federal grand jury, as well as a separate Georgia panel examining allegations of Trump mishandling classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida.

A spokesman for the special counsel's office declined to comment.

Pence has spoken extensively about Trump's pressure campaign urging him to reject Biden's victory in the days leading up to Jan. 6, including in his book, "So Help Me God." Pence, as vice president, had a cere-



Former Vice President Mike Pence speaks to reporters before the MockCon event at University Chapel at Washington and Lee University, March 21, 2023, in Lexington, Va.

Associated Press

monial role overseeing the counting of the Electoral College vote, but did not have the power to impact

the results despite Trump's contention otherwise. Pence has said that Trump endangered his family and

everyone else who was at the Capitol that day and history will hold him "accountable." □

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Poll: Religious service attendance a bit down after pandemic

By **LUIS ANDRES HENAO**
Associated Press

A “stable share” of Americans has participated in religious services in some way – virtually or in person – during the coronavirus pandemic, though in-person attendance is slightly lower than before the COVID-19 outbreak.

Those are among the key findings in a comprehensive report released Tuesday by the Pew Research Center titled: “How the Pandemic Has Affected Attendance at U.S. Religious Services.” The poll surveyed 11,377 U.S. adults in November last year. Its margin of error for the full sample of respondents is plus or minus 1.5 percentage points.

The poll found that the share of U.S. adults typically attending religious services at least once a month dropped from 33% in 2019, before the COVID-19 outbreak, to 30% in 2022. About 20% of Americans say they now attend in person less often than they did before the pandemic.

But the survey also found that the percentage of U.S. adults who take part in religious services in some way each month -- in person,



The Rev. Manuel Rodriguez sits in the pews of his church, Our Lady of Sorrows, on March 5, 2021, in the Queens borough of New York.

virtually or both -- remained steady since the early days of the pandemic.

Researchers based their analysis on five surveys conducted since the start of the pandemic. They show that “a remarkably steady share of Americans – about 40% – say they have participated in religious services in the prior month one way or the other (either in person or virtually, i.e., by stream-

ing online or watching on TV).” When asked whether they now attend religious services more or less often than they did before COVID-19, more Americans say that their attendance has declined. In San Francisco, the historic Old St. Mary’s Cathedral struggled to stay open during the pandemic. The 160-year-old Catholic church, which is heavily dependent on older worship-

pers and tourists, lost most of its revenue after parishes closed during the pandemic. The ranks of regular parishioners dropped from 300 before COVID-19, to about 200 now, said the Rev. John Ardis, who had to dismiss most of the lay staff and close the parish preschool. “About 40% of our regular parishioners have chosen not to return,” Ardis said, adding that most parishio-

Associated Press

ners are elderly and those who returned are still wearing masks at services. The pandemic “has been a big and continual hit,” he said. Thomas Groome, professor of theology and religious education at Boston College, said he wasn’t surprised by the survey’s findings.

“There are some signs that attendance is coming back, but it’ll probably never come back to where it was before the pandemic,” he said. “I think people learned how to nurture their spiritual lives and faith without necessarily going to their local church every Sunday,” he added. “I know some of them went there virtually by Zoom... many read the scriptures themselves or they got together with neighbors or they bonded into family groups.” By November 2022, 20% of respondents said they were attending in person less often, while 7% said they were going in person more often. And 15% said they were participating in services virtually more often, while 5% said they were watching services online or on TV less often. □

Court reinstates Adnan Syed’s conviction in ‘Serial’ case

By **BRIAN WITTE** and **LEA SKENE**

Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP)

— A Maryland court did not give the family of the murder victim in the case chronicled in the hit podcast “Serial” enough time to attend a court hearing in person that led to Adnan Syed’s release, a Maryland appellate court ruled Tuesday, and it ordered a new hearing to be held.

Though Syed’s conviction has been reinstated, he will not be taken back into custody.

In a 2-1 decision, the Appellate Court of Maryland ruled the state’s law provides victims with the right to prior notice of the hear-

ing on a motion to vacate convictions, and that right was violated in the case of the family of Hae Min Lee, Syed’s ex-girlfriend and high school classmate who died more than two decades ago.

The court ruled that giving her brother, Young Lee, only one business day before the hearing was “insufficient time to reasonably allow Mr. Lee, who lived in California, to attend the hearing in person,” and required him to attend the hearing remotely.

“Allowing a victim entitled to attend a court proceeding to attend in person, when the victim makes that request and all other persons involved in the hearing

appear in person, is consistent with the constitutional requirement that victims be treated with dignity and respect,” the court ruled.

The court ruled it is obligated to remedy the lower court’s violations, “as long we can do so without violating Mr. Syed’s right to be free from double jeopardy.”

“We can do that, and accordingly, we vacate the circuit court’s order vacating Mr. Syed’s convictions, which results in the reinstatement of the original convictions and sentence,” the ruling said. “We remand for a new, legally compliant, and transparent hearing on the motion to vacate, where Mr. Lee



Adnan Syed gets emotional as he speaks to reporters outside the Robert C. Murphy Courts of Appeal building after a hearing, Thursday, Feb. 2, 2023, in Annapolis, Md.

Associated Press

is given notice of the hearing that is sufficient to allow him to attend in person, evidence supporting the motion to vacate is presented, and the court states its rea-

sons in support of its decision.”

The family had asked the court for a redo of the September hearing that led to Syed’s release. □

Migrants start fire at Mexico detention center, killing 40

By **MARÍA VERZA**

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Migrants fearing deportation set mattresses ablaze at an immigration detention center in northern Mexico, starting a fire that killed at least 40 people, the president said Tuesday, in one of the deadliest events ever at a Mexican immigration lockup.

Hours after the fire broke out late Monday, rows of bodies were laid out under shimmering silver sheets outside the facility in Ciudad Juarez, which is across from El Paso, Texas, and a major crossing point for migrants. Ambulances, firefighters and vans from the morgue swarmed the scene.

Twenty-nine people were injured and are in "delicate-serious" condition, according to the National Immigration Institute.

At the time of the blaze, 68 men from Central and South America were being held at the facility, the agency said.

Immigration authorities identified the dead and injured as being from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador, with Guatemalans being the largest contingent, according to a statement from the Mexican attorney general's office.

Guatemala Foreign Affairs



Medics give aid to a migrant who survived a fire that broke out at a Mexican immigration detention center in Juarez on Monday, March 27, 2023.

Minister Mario Búcaro said 28 of the dead were Guatemalan citizens.

"We are going to look to find those responsible for this," Búcaro said.

Mexico President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said the fire was started by migrants in protest after learning they would be deported. "They never imagined that this would cause this terrible misfortune," López Obrador said, adding that the director of the country's immigration agency was on the scene.

The detention facility is a short walk from the U.S. border and across the street

from Juarez's city hall.

At the facility's doors, Venezuelan migrants gathered Tuesday to demand information about relatives.

Katiuska Márquez, a 23-year-old Venezuelan woman with her two children, ages 2 and 4, was seeking her half-brother, Orlando Maldonado, who had been traveling with her. "We want to know if he is alive or if he's dead," she said. She wondered how all the guards who were inside made it out alive and only the migrants died. "How could they not get them out?"

Márquez and Maldona-

do were detained Monday with the children and about 20 others. They had been in Juarez waiting for an appointment from U.S. authorities to request asylum. They were staying in a rented room where 10 people were living, paying for it with the money they begged in the street.

"I was at a stoplight with a piece of cardboard asking for what I needed for my children, and people were helping me with food," she said. Suddenly agents came and detained everyone.

"Immigration grabbed me by the jacket and put me

in the truck with my brother and other families," she said.

Everyone was taken to the immigration facility but only the men were placed in the cells. Three hours later, the women and children were released.

Tensions between authorities and migrants had apparently been running high in recent weeks in Ciudad Juarez, where shelters are full of people waiting for opportunities to cross into the U.S. or for the asylum process to play out.

More than 30 migrant shelters and other advocacy organizations published an open letter March 9 that complained of a criminalization of migrants and asylum seekers in the city. It accused authorities of abusing migrants and using excessive force in rounding them up, including complaints that municipal police questioned people in the street about their immigration status without cause. The high level of frustration in Ciudad Juarez was evident earlier this month when hundreds of mostly Venezuelan migrants tried to force their way across one of the international bridges to El Paso, acting on false rumors that the United States would allow them to enter the country. U.S. authorities blocked their attempts. □

Associated Press

MI5 hikes Northern Ireland terror threat level to 'severe'



Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Chris Heaton-Harris arrives for a Cabinet meeting at 10 Downing Street in London, Tuesday, March 28, 2023.

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The U.K.'s MI5 intelligence service on Tuesday raised the terrorism threat level in Northern Ireland to "severe" amid an increase in activity by dissident Irish republican militants.

Severe is the second-highest rung on a five-point scale and means an attack is considered highly likely.

The threat had stood one notch lower at "substantial" for the past year.

Paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland laid down their arms after the 1998 Good Friday peace accord largely ended three

decades of violent conflict between Irish republican and British loyalist groups and U.K. security forces that killed more than 3,600 people.

But small Irish Republican Army splinter groups have continued to launch sporadic attacks on security forces.

U.K. Northern Ireland Secretary Chris Heaton-Harris said that "in recent months, we have seen an increase in levels of activity relating to Northern Ireland-related terrorism, which has targeted police officers serving their communities and also

put at risk the lives of children and other members of the public."

He urged people to "remain vigilant but not be alarmed."

Last month, senior police officer John Caldwell was shot by two masked men as he coached a children's soccer team in the town of Omagh, about 60 miles (nearly 100 kilometers) west of Belfast.

Police say he suffered life-changing injuries.

An IRA splinter group known as the New IRA claimed responsibility.

The change to the threat

level comes ahead of events commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday agreement.

U.S. President Joe Biden is expected to visit Northern Ireland to mark the anniversary.

Major players in the peace process, including former U.S. President Bill Clinton and ex-British Prime Minister Tony Blair, are also due in Belfast for commemorative events.

The threat level for the rest of the U.K. remains at substantial, meaning an attack is considered likely. □

Montenegro's president: EU's neglect gave Russia a platform

By **PREDRAG MILIC**

Associated Press

PODGORICA, Montenegro

(AP) — Montenegro's pro-Western president criticized the European Union for allegedly allowing Russia to spread its influence in the Western Balkans, saying Tuesday that the volatile region has become a "platform" for anti-EU policies due to the bloc's "negligence." President Milo Djukanovic spoke to the Associated Press as he prepares for a Sunday runoff election with a political newcomer who has the support of the Montenegrin government, which includes parties seeking closer relations with Serbia and Russia.

"Russia has simply walked into an open space left by the European Union," Djukanovic said of the EU's position toward the Balkans. "The European Union in the past 10 years didn't know what to do with the Western Balkans, but Russia did. It has developed its network in the Balkans."

Djukanovic, who has held Montenegro's largely ceremonial presidency since 2018, won the most votes in the first round of the country's presidential election,



Pro-Western incumbent Milo Djukanovic speaks to journalists after casting his ballot at the polling station in Montenegro's capital Podgorica, Sunday, March 19, 2023.

Associated Press

which was held March 19. Analysts in Montenegro think his challenger in the two-candidate runoff, former Economy Minister Jakov Milatovic, stands a good chance of winning because he has the backing of other candidates and political parties.

With an early parliamentary election scheduled for June 11, this weekend's vote is considered an im-

portant indicator of the future path of Montenegro, a small NATO member nation of 620,000 people.

A political stalemate has stalled the country's EU path and raised fears of instability as the war rages in Ukraine. Djukanovic told the AP the presidential contest presents a choice between his pro-EU policies and the "brutal populism" of the current coalition govern-

ment, which formally backs EU integration but is dominated by parties that favor closer ties with Serbia and Russia. Djukanovic's Democratic Party of Socialists governed the country more or less unchallenged for three decades. The president alleged that the ruling coalition that came to power after a 2020 parliamentary vote has devastated Montenegro eco-

nomically and financially.

"For the past 2 1/2 years, we have witnessed serious stumbling by Montenegro," Djukanovic said.

The coalition government has pledged that Montenegro would remain on its European Union path. Milatovic, the president's challenger, also has expressed support for the country pursuing EU membership, but Djukanovic said the ruling majority's policies indicate otherwise.

Milatovic served as economy minister from December 2020 through April 2022. "Mr. Milatovic is a man who is still part of a parliamentary majority which won the (2020) election and which is directly responsible for such (bad) results," Djukanovic charged.

Analysts say the Western-educated Milatovic, 36, is seen as the favorite on Sunday against Djukanovic, 61, who as prime minister took Montenegro to independence from Serbia in 2006 and defied Russia in 2017 to secure NATO membership.

A political novice, Milatovic has campaigned as a fresh face for voters who are fed up with established politicians. □

Amnesty: West's 'double standards' fuel Mideast repression

By **KAREEM CHEHAYEB**

Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A leading

international rights group on Tuesday decried what it said were double standards by Western countries that have rallied behind a

"robust response" to Russia's invasion of Ukraine but remain "lukewarm" on issues of human rights violations in the Middle East.

According to Amnesty International, such double standards only fuel further

repression for millions in the region.

The sharp rebuke came as the London-based watchdog launched its annual report at a news conference at its office in Beirut, Lebanon's capital. Every year, the report documents and analyzes patterns of human rights violations and abuses across the world.

In the report, Amnesty urged the international community to hold perpetrators of human rights abuses in the Middle East and North Africa to account, and to address the issue of migration without discrimination.

"They immediately opened their borders to receive refugees from Ukraine," Aya Majzoub, Amnesty's deputy chief for Mideast and North Africa, said of

Western nations. She said that's in stark contrast to how the same countries generally treat refugees and migrants trying to flee war-torn Syria, the chaos in Libya or Lebanon's economic meltdown.

The number of attempts by migrants to enter the European Union without authorization reached around 330,000 in 2022, the highest in five years. In 2015, over 1 million people, mostly Syrian refugees fleeing the conflict, reached Europe. Germany received accolades for welcoming large numbers of Syrian refugees at the time, and the U.S. and European countries frequently point out the billions of dollars they have given in aid to help refugees and internally displaced Syrians.

Today, many European governments are calling for reforms to the asylum-seeking system for better efficiency and to distinguish between refugees fleeing war and persecution and migrants searching for job opportunities, who they say are creating a strain on the asylum system and should be returned.

Majzoub spoke to The Associated Press in an interview after the news conference. She praised the international community for denouncing Russian President Vladimir Putin's attacks against civilians in Ukraine, including systematic torture and killing in occupied regions which a U.N.-backed inquiry earlier this month said amount to war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity. □



Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East & North Africa Aya Majzoub, speaks during an interview with The Associated Press in Beirut, Lebanon, Tuesday, March 28, 2023.

Associated Press



Prime Minister Evelyn Wever-Croes: “Our coalition is stronger than ever”

(Oranjestad)—Recently, Prime Minister Evelyn Wever-Croes, along with Minister Danguí Oduber for Tourism and Health, visited Jacksonville, Florida, to meet with executives from Jaxport to sign a Memorandum of Understanding for a new cargo route between Aruba and the U.S.

In relation to this, our reported approached the prime minister with a few questions about this MoU. Firstly, our reporter asked if there are any reasons as to why the ministers in charge of the finances for the economy and transportation were not present during this meeting in Jacksonville.

The prime minister indicated that she had signed the MoU with Jaxport on Monday to explore the possibility of collaboration between Aruba and the U.S., and seeing how the MoU concerns the general development of the island, as the prime minister, she thought signing the MoU would be a no-brainer.

She remarked that this MoU concerns the finances managed by Minister Danguí Oduber as well as APA. The latter is currently working with Jaxport so that the government agency can help APA with the terminals. This, Minister Oduber had previously arranged with Jaxport already, and Monday's meeting was to

finalize this agreement.

The prime minister further explained that besides this, they would also like to explore the possibility to use liquefied natural gas (LNG) at the Aruba docks to provide cruise ships LNG when they dock on the island. This matter is also included in the finance management by Minister Oduber, who was also present at the meeting. For this goal, Eagle LNG also signed the MoU agreement.

She added that they will continue to explore options to open more routes for cargo and cruise ships for Aruba. This will again all be managed by Minister Danguí Oduber.

“If we can finalize the agreement, this can provide general benefits for our tourism (Minister Oduber), energy sector (Minister G. Croes), economy (Minister Wever), transportation (Minister Arends) and finally, for the island's general finances (Minister Maduro). This trajectory will

be effective immediately. Therefore—as you can see—this agreement really concerns different areas of general importance, which all falls under my ministry,” the prime minister clarified.

In relation to her ministry—formed by a coalition between the MEP and RAIZ parties—our reporter asked the leader if there is a division amongst the members of the coalition, to which she assured that this is not the case. “Our coalition is stronger than ever. I'll refer to one small example: Minister Arends (RAIZ) and I both attended the UN Water Conference in New York last week to represent Aruba.”

In terms of the LNG services for cruise ships, our reporter asked the prime minister if this also includes the San Nicolas dock where the fuel pipeline is located, seeing as there has never been a mention of LNG in the down town area, which would indicate a pipeline running all the way to the down town area.

The prime minister explained that it is already public knowledge that Eagle LNG is currently building a bunker station in San Nicolas and that the process is going well. According to her, the company is also communicating with the inhabitants of that district.

She clarified that there will be no LNG pipelines in-

stalled in the down town area, but the APA has now asked for a tank station at the cruise ship dock (as it is common practice in other countries) so they can offer LNG services for the ships. Many cruise ships have switched to LNG and it is for this reason why APA is interested in a tank station. APA is already having discussions about this project. □

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Main dishes

King Fred is all about chicken and chicken only. Not just chicken but, Fred's chicken! On the menu you have an array of chicken dishes like Drunk chicken, prepared in red wine and served with mashed pota-



toes and mushrooms; Chicken parmesan and pasta smothered in a rich tomato sauce; Indian chicken served with rice, potatoes, green beans & curry masala sauce; Italian chicken pot pie with spinach, mushrooms and creamy Italian sauce under a puff pastry sheet; chicken truffle tagliatelle pasta with chicken and creamy truffle sauce; a juicy Chicken burger prepared with our homemade spice mix on a slice of brioche bread with bacon strips, onions, mushrooms, lettuce, Gouda cheese, piccalilli mayonnaise, French fries & coleslaw.

It's been said that Fred's chickens are the ones to die for! Compliment your dish with a side of your choice and voila..!

For the meat and fish lovers, ask your waiter for the options because we love you too.



Drinks

The drink menu is carefully selected with the most popular cocktails, wines and beers. After dinner you can enjoy one of the delicious special made coffees or after dinner cocktails, or you can hop upstairs to Fransjes Bar by Frans, who is a well-known bartender in the Aruban hospitality industry. He will serve you cold drinks and a great view for a reasonable price.

Make your reservations now! King Fred & Princess Diana opens from Wednesday – Sunday from 8am – 1pm for breakfast and from 5pm – 9.30pm for dinner! Situated in Aruba's only Dutch windmill, walking distance from all the major hotels.

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Aruba Today is delighted to share to its readers a new segment called "Beauty and the Beach", where we take a minute to honor our guests who have decided to spend their vacation on our beautiful and warm island.

In this edition, we'd like to give a shout out to **Sanderijn, Tom and family from The Netherlands**. Aruba is always proud to host all families and guests. We at Aruba Today encourage any visitor of the island to send in their pictures and/or messages; who knows? You might get on the cover!

Alhambra
CASINO AND SHOPS
casinoalhambra.com





Article by Etnia Nativa
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 Etnia Nativa is close to high rise Hotels



Jellyfishes, casual visitors

Episode CXCIX- 199

Destination values, native heritage, and cultural identity are what Etnia Nativa advocates for as its own particular way of safeguarding all reasons to love Aruba. Through this cultural blog, "Island-Insight," we share awareness, educate, and safeguard native heritage. It is how we encourage you to experiment with an island-keeper state of mind during your stay.

To "thrive like a local," you need to be informed, to learn, to stay safe, and to be aware that nature can be unforgiving. Jellyfish, or medusa, as they are known in biology, are occasional ocean visitors that have been spotted on various beaches on our island in recent days. They are fascinating beings that captivate us when in aquariums but make us run from the sea when we are in direct contact with nature!

Although they are not the most primitive animals, it is said that they keep the secret of evolution. There are fossil records from the Primary Era (more than 500 million years ago). They are from the Cnidarian group and appeared before sponges. Most jellyfish live a few miles offshore and only come close to shore with high winds or strong currents. Jellyfish are not "hunters," but many carry special cells in their tentacles to immobilize their small victims. The same that burn our bodies and make us feel very sick when reacting to the poison carried by different species.

Despite not being a true jellyfish, the Portuguese man-of-war (*Physalia physalis*) is often classified as a killer jellyfish. It should be noted that there are no killer jellyfish in our direct area; however, we can be very sensitive to their sting, which is very painful and only fatal in cases of allergy or very extreme exposure.

The truth is that each jellyfish is a unique animal, and in the case of the Portuguese man of war, it is a floating colony made up of smaller, genetically identical entities that live and work in unison.

At first glance, the Portuguese man-of-war is very striking and even beautiful to look at, but it is better to keep a safe distance and never, under any circumstances, touch one. It is partially transparent. It lacks a backbone and kills its prey with stinging tentacles. It feeds on small fish and plankton.

The bites cause intense pain to humans, leaving red, whip-shaped welts on the skin that typically last two



to three days, although the pain should subside after about 1 to 3 hours (depending on the person's biology).

However, the venom can travel to the lymph nodes and cause symptoms that mimic an allergic reaction, including swelling of the larynx, blocked airways, cardiac distress, and the inability to breathe. Other symptoms can include fever, shock, and, in some extreme cases, death, although this is extremely rare.

We must be aware that dead specimens, even a detached tentacle (those that wash ashore), can sting as painfully as the living organism in the water and can remain potent for days after the organism has died or the detached tentacle has been in contact with one's skin.

You should never scratch or rub the affected area with sand. Locals say that you must urinate on the stringed area; it is thought to relieve hives. The "urticaria" is formed by jellyfish cells at the time of contact that adhere to our skin. If those cells die, they stop emitting the toxic element. An acid, such as urine, can neutralize them, although it is not the best solution. In this regard, acetic acid rather than vinegar may be preferable. Also, a change in the salinity of the cells can cause the release of more poison, just as occurs with urine or fresh water. Hence, only salty sea water can provide slight relief. So to stay on the

safe side, you better go see a doctor.

Medical attention may be necessary to relieve pain or open the airways if the pain becomes excruciating, lasts more than three hours, or if breathing becomes difficult. Cases in which bites completely encircle a young child's trunk are among those that have the potential to be fatal. However, Aruba is safe for now, and the main thing is to be aware and prudent.

If you're intrigued by Aruba's native lifestyle and its cultural heritage do something outside of the tourist grid. Become one of the exclusive visitors of Etnia Nativa, a private museum/home where you will be able to touch and be touched by authentic Aruba heritage, a spectacle of native art, archaic as well as archaeological artifacts, lithic tools, colonial furniture, and other items of the island's bygone era.

Etnia Nativa is, since 1994, the home of Anthony, our acclaimed columnist, artist craftsman, and island Piache, who guides and lectures you through his resplendent collection. Etnia Nativa is the only place that recreates and introduces you to an authentic glimpse into native cultural heritage. Something completely different for a change—a contemporary Native Aruba experience! Appointment is required WhatsApp + 297 592 2702 or etnianativa03@gmail.com



Fruit Loose & Veggie Boost

Fresh fruits make a tropical holiday's picture complete. Whether you see the mango's hanging in the trees or the fresh fruit cocktail on the side table of your pool bed, the link is there: you are in the tropics. Aruba grows her own fruits and veggies and there are some pretty out-of-space local species you may never had heard of, but really healthy and delicious.

Mispel

This is a fruit with a character (5-10 cm/2-4 inches). It does not ripe until it is picked or falls off the tree. Mispel is hard with a sandpaper like texture when immature, soft and juicy when ripe. It's technically a berry, but contains a skin similar to that of a kiwi. It's grainy and sweet, with a light, musky flavor. The sap or gum from the tree is also a source of 'chicle' the original ingredient used to make chewing gum. Rich in tannins, antioxidants shown to contain anti-inflammatory compounds, and vitamin C, essential for healthy immune function. Season: year-round.

Kenepa

Ovoid green fruit that grows in bunches on trees up to 30m high. The fruit is related to the lychee and have tight, thin but rigid skins. Inside the skin is the tart, tangy, or sweet pulp of the fruit covering a large seed. The pulp is usually cream or orange colored. Kenepa strengthens the immune system, and prevents the reproduction of bacteria and viruses in the body. This fruit is highly recommended to treat lung infections and urinary tract infections. It also helps to cure insomnia and rejuvenates the nervous system. Season: the fruit typically ripen during the summer.



Druif

There is no chance you did not bump into one of the sea grape trees while spending your vacation on Aruba. The sea grape plant is often used in ocean-side landscaping in sandy soil right on the beach and it produces clusters of fruit that resemble grapes. Are sea grapes edible? Yes, they are. Animals enjoy sea grapes and humans can eat them as well, and they are used to make jam. They contain very low calories and sugar, enabling good bacterium to digest food and excrete waste quickly which is effective in preventing constipation. Season: Sep-Oct.



Shimaruku

Maybe Aruba's most popular wild fruit tree. You may have noticed cars at the side of the road and people picking those red berries. Well, that's Shimaruku. The local habit to stop for these delicious fruits goes from generation to generation. Its fruit's degree of sour depends on the amount of rain it gets. Red Shimarukus tend to taste better than orange. The fruit has super power: a true vitamin bomb. Adults only need to eat 3-4 of these berries to meet their daily recommended amount of Vitamin C. Season: Rainy months (Oct-Jan).



Tamarind

A delicious, sweet fruit that has a wide variety of uses and applications, both for medicinal and culinary purposes. It is a medium-sized bushy tree with evergreen leaves and fruit that develops in pods characterized by long, brown shells. Inside is a sticky, fleshy, juicy pulp, which is the Tamarind fruit. Both sweet and sour in taste, the fruit contains a



significant level of vitamin C, as well as vitamin E, B vitamins, calcium, iron, phosphorous, potassium, manganese, and dietary fiber. There are also a number of organic compounds that make tamarind a powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory agent. Season: March.

When it comes to veggies the island certainly offers a home-grown selection. They taste delicious and have their specific talents to boost your immune system. Start the day with a 'batida' (smoothie) enriched with a local veggie touch or select your restaurant that offers local vegetable dishes to get the real pure taste of it.

Konkomber chiquito

This is a sort of local squash, but looks like a cucumber with prickly skin. The taste however is bitterer than the cucumber and the vegetable is smaller in size but bigger in width. Inside is a soft, fleshy pulp and seeds, just like the cucumber. Konkomber chiquito is grown in the island and used in salads and 'stoba' (stew) or on its own in vinegar. The veggie contains multiple B vitamins, including vitamin B1, vitamin B5, and vitamin B7 (biotin). B vitamins are known to help ease feelings of anxiety and buffer some of the damaging effects of stress. Additionally this veggie is rich in two of the most basic elements needed for healthy digestion: water and fiber. Season: year-round.



Jambo

Family of Okra, also known as 'lady's fingers': a green flowering plant. Okra belongs to the same plant family as hibiscus and cotton. A classic favorite dish in Aruba is Sopi di Jambo. It has long been favored as a food for the health-conscious. It contains potassium, vitamin B, vitamin C, folic acid, and calcium. It's low in calories and has a high dietary fiber content. Recently, a new benefit of including okra in your diet is being considered. Okra has been suggested to help manage blood sugar in cases of type 1, type 2, and gestational diabetes. Season: year-round.

Bonchi' Cunucu

A long, small bean, boiled for a side dish or snack. Long beans have a chewy, crunchy texture—more so than snap beans—and a flavor reminiscent of the dry navy bean or asparagus. Besides stir-fry, soups and salads, the long bean is a good choice for stewing, braising (to remain chewy and firm), sautéing, shallow frying, and deep frying. With cooking, the long bean's bean flavor intensifies. Long beans are low in calories, about 45 calories per cup, and rich in vitamin A and also contain vitamin C and potassium. Season: year-round.

Pompuna

In the endless summer of Caribbean living we only have to concern ourselves with a wet season and a dry season. Still we do indulge heavily in the pleasures of pumpkin and enjoy Caribbean pumpkin recipes year round. A popular dish in Aruban restaurants is Sopa Di Pompuna, don't miss it. This dish is made of pumpkin soup, and parsley. Pumpkins are rich in flavonoid polyphenolic antioxidants such as xanthin, lutein and carotenes and also contain vitamins. Pumpkin seeds are a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins, minerals and proteins. Pumpkins are used to make desserts, breads and soups. □



CROSSWORD

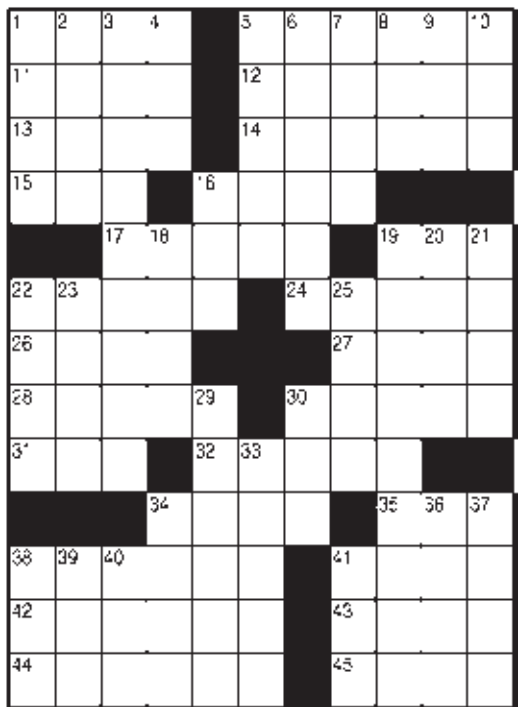
By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 43 Onion
 - 1 Informal layer farewell
 - 5 Collect \$200, maybe
 - 11 Final, e.g.
 - 12 Reverberated
 - 13 Marina spot
 - 14 Worn down
 - 15 — Aviv
 - 16 State frankly
 - 17 Diamond corners
 - 19 Newsstand buy, for short
 - 22 Crab's place
 - 24 Hackneyed
 - 26 St. Louis sight
 - 27 Mob event
 - 28 Gags
 - 30 Stately dance
 - 31 Braying beast
 - 32 Witty remarks
 - 34 Crooned
 - 35 Diving bird
 - 38 Speculative question
 - 41 Lot unit
 - 42 Pal of Pooh
- DOWN**
- 1 Final, e.g.
 - 2 Car bar
 - 3 Members of the offense
 - 4 Band blaster
 - 5 Irritate
 - 6 Clue heading
 - 7 Display
 - 8 Grassy clump
 - 9 "Golly!"
 - 10 Strange
 - 16 Cigar bit
 - 18 Ibuprofen target
 - 19 They hold letters
 - 20 Scads
 - 21 Stan of jazz
 - 22 Mexican peninsula
 - 23 Amorous archer
 - 25 Snare
 - 29 Knight's attendant
 - 30 Costume part
 - 33 Hungry, probably
 - 34 Put away
 - 36 "Exodus" author
 - 37 Lane's co-worker
 - 38 Fly catcher
 - 39 That woman
 - 40 Pro vote
 - 41 Pharaoh's symbol



Yesterday's answer

- 19 They hold letters
- 20 Scads
- 21 Stan of jazz
- 22 Mexican peninsula
- 23 Amorous archer
- 25 Snare
- 29 Knight's attendant
- 30 Costume part
- 33 Hungry, probably
- 34 Put away
- 36 "Exodus" author
- 37 Lane's co-worker
- 38 Fly catcher
- 39 That woman
- 40 Pro vote
- 41 Pharaoh's symbol



AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-29

CRYPTOQUOTE

V O L F H Y H H M H Y N S W H R D
K D C T F H B T H N D B L Q H
L S U H L F H Y X H H E W I I V B C S A Y
F H D Y L V J J R L D C L F H Y H
O S Y H M H Y — D . D . W V J B H

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: I ONLY HOPE THAT WE NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF ONE THING — THAT IT ALL STARTED WITH A MOUSE. WALT DISNEY

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Queen and Adam Lambert eager for their post-pandemic tour

By **MARK KENNEDY**
AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Queen and Adam Lambert are hitting the road this fall for a North American expansion of their Rhapsody Tour, with a freshly minted knight on-stage and plenty of post-pandemic energy. The band boasts about a new production with a some new songs added to the setlist and a few surprises that members won't reveal, the product of plenty of time to think about the way the tour looks and sounds.

"We do constantly try and keep ourselves interested because it's nice to change the show around, even in small ways," says drummer Roger Taylor. "Obviously we do some sort of deep cuts whilst at the same time keeping the big hits that everybody knows. People want to see what they know. But it's nice to spice it up with a few things they might not expect." The tour will make 14 stops throughout the U.S. and Canada, including shows in Baltimore, New York, Atlanta, Denver, Boston, Toronto, Chicago and Dallas, before closing out in Los



Adam Lambert, left, and Brian May of Queen + Adam Lambert perform in Chicago on Aug. 9, 2019.

Angeles in November. The concerts are being billed as a continuation of Queen's 2017-2019 Rhapsody Tour. It's the first time the band has toured North America in four years, because of the pandemic, and guitarist Brian May who was recently knighted by King Charles III says he, Taylor and singer Lambert have deepened their bond. "For a long time we were

sitting there thinking, 'What the hell do we do?' But when we came back to it, it was very fresh, which is probably a nice thing," he says. "I think we learned all over again how to interact with each other. So I think we are on a different level." The band is riding a wave of respect following the 2018 release of the Oscar-winning "Bohemian Rhapsody," the biopic of lead

singer Freddie Mercury, who died in 1991. "It brought in a younger audience and younger people are what you feed on, in a sense," says May. "The energy of young people is what we're about. We've always been about that. So it's been fantastic for us that a whole new generation understand what we're about and come and want to really rock."

While the band won't reveal the setlist, it isn't too hard to predict "Bohemian Rhapsody" will be played. The complex song that no one thought would be a radio hit has emerged as one of their top tracks, in large part because of 1992's "Wayne's World," where it played during a key scene. "That one took us really into another league," says Taylor, who calls it a "game-changer." Expect also to hear "Don't Stop Me Now," which Taylor says started as a medium hit and has emerged as a top Queen request and "Who Wants to Live Forever," which May says Lambert takes "to a different place" live.

The time away has also given members a chance to appreciate finding Lambert, who impressed with a Queen song when he auditioned for "American Idol" during the 2009 season. Lambert started performing with Queen in 2011. "Our material, our songs, are very eclectic and the plain fact is that Adam is a truly great singer, and there are not many singers that could cover that range of material as wonderfully as he does," says Taylor. □

Associated Press

Wisconsin school bans Miley, Dolly duet from class concert

By **HARM VENHUIZEN**
Associated Press/Report for America

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Administrators at a Wisconsin elementary school stopped a first-grade class from performing a Miley Cyrus and Dolly Parton duet promoting LGBTQ acceptance because the song "could be perceived as controversial."

Students at Heyer Elementary School in Waukesha had prepared a rendition of "Rainbowland" for their spring concert, but school officials struck the song from the lineup last week. Parents in the district say the decision was made because the song encourages LGBTQ acceptance and references rainbows. Superintendent James Se-

bert, who did not immediately return a call on Monday, confirmed to Fox6 that administrators had removed "Rainbowland" from the first-grade concert because it might not be "appropriate for the age and maturity level of the students." He also cited a school board policy against raising controversial issues in classrooms. Sebert has previously prohibited rainbows and pride flags from being displayed in Waukesha classrooms and suspended the school district's equity and diversity work in 2021. "Let's all dig down deep inside, brush the judgment and fear aside," the song from Cyrus' 2017 album "Younger Now" goes. "Living in a Rainbowland,

where you and I go hand in hand. Oh, I'd be lying if I said this was fine, all the hurt and the hate going on here." First-grade teacher Melissa Tempel said she chose the song because its message seemed universal and sweet. The class concert's theme was "The World" and included other songs such as "Here Comes the Sun," by The Beatles and "What a Wonderful World," by Louis Armstrong. "My students were just devastated. They really liked this song and we had already begun singing it," Tempel said Monday. Administrators also initially banned the song "Rainbow Connection" from The Muppets but later reversed that decision, according to

Tempel. Parents have been angered by the song's removal, Tempel said. But she was more concerned about what the ban and other district policies against ex-

pressing LGBTQ support meant for students. "These confusing messages about rainbows are ultimately creating a culture that seems unsafe towards queer people," she said. □



Dolly Parton, left, and Miley Cyrus perform "Jolene" at the 61st annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles on Feb. 10, 2019.

Associated Press

Column: End of the WGCs with more to come, minus Match Play

By DOUG FERGUSON

AP Golf Writer

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Nick Price and Rory McIlroy are footnotes in World Golf Championships history.

Price hit the first shot when this series began in 1999, at La Costa in an opening match against Frankie Minoza of the Philippines. McIlroy hit the last one, a 6-foot par putt on the 17th hole at Austin Country Club to beat Scottie Scheffler.

Too bad it was only for third place.

That was the last of 2,022 matches over 24 years on six golf courses in two countries. Match Play started and ended the WGCs. In between were 57 others played on 13 courses.

The eulogy requires an asterisk.

The WGC-HSBC Champions in Shanghai has a contract through 2025. It was last played in 2019 because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the PGA Tour hasn't said what will happen. The China Golf Association ultimately decides if it gets played, though there is a clear sense the tour would love for this one to quietly go away.

But is this really the end of the WGCs? Only in name, or initials.

Cameron Young grew up around golf as the son of Sleepy Hollow's head pro, and while he's only 25, he still remembers Tiger Woods winning most of them. Fair



Sam Burns, right, kisses his trophy after defeating Cameron Young in the final match at the Dell Technologies Match Play Championship golf tournament in Austin, Texas, Sunday, March 26, 2023. Michael Dell, left, presented the trophy.

enough, since Woods won 18 of the 47 times he played in WGCs.

"Not quite the majors, but they were their own thing that was really cool," Young said after losing the championship match to Sam Burns. "They kind of filled a unique space. It's been really fun the last two years coming to play this one unfortunately, the only one left. It's a different experience. You get the best 64 players in the world in one place. "You just know every year this is who you're going to get and it's just fun testing yourself against that

group of guys."

Gone is the WGC that originally alternated between the U.S. and Europe, then replaced the regular PGA Tour event at Doral in 2007, went to Mexico in 2016 and made a final stop in Florida in 2021. Gone is the WGC at Firestone, which in 2018 took over a regular tournament in Memphis, Tennessee, and then quietly went away when Memphis became a FedEx Cup playoff. And now the Match Play is gone, at least as a WGC. PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan said earlier this month it "didn't work"

in next year's schedule.

That's because the 2024 schedule is loaded with WGCs. It's just that now they will be known as "DEs," which stands for "designated events." It's an acronym that mostly gets used at the GH (that's an acronym for "global home" the tour uses to describe its headquarters).

Think about it. These \$20 million tournaments will have limited fields with no cuts for the best players in the world, along with room for a few other players who have earned their way into the field.

The difference is that those other players will all be PGA Tour members.

To Young's point, in every tournament, you know who you're going to get. They will all be very good. They will fill a unique space. They will be fun to play. And everyone gets rich.

Missing, of course, is the avenue for players around the world. Most of them have an ambition of joining the PGA Tour, anyway. But there was a charm about the WGCs in having players from every corner of the globe having a chance to shine on a big stage.

One year at Doral, officials were trying to get a rising star in the same group as Woods. They settled on a young South African Louis Oosthuizen, who two years later had that name engraved on the claret jug at St. Andrews.

Shubhankar Sharma of India got into the WGC in Mexico City in 2018 at age 21. He held the 54-hole lead until fading on Sunday. Far more memorable was when Sharma saw Phil Mickelson on the practice green at Chapultepec before the third round and went to introduce himself. Mickelson thought he was media and said: "Not right now. After the round."

Otherwise, the concept hasn't changed. The WGCs started with three, then expanded to four in 2009 with Shanghai. □

Associated Press

Elena Rybakina hits 10 aces in Miami for 12th straight win

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. (AP)

— Reigning Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina extended her winning streak to 12 matches and delivered at least 10 aces for the fourth straight outing while beating 25th-seeded Martina Trevisan 6-3, 6-0 on Tuesday to reach the Miami Open semifinals.

Rybakina's 10 aces raised her totals to 46 through four matches at the hard-court tournament in Florida and a WTA-leading 201 this sea-

son.

The 23-year-old, who represents Kazakhstan, improved to 20-4 in 2023, including a run to the Australian Open final in January and a title at Indian Wells, California, last week.

She is trying to become only the fifth player to win the women's trophies at Indian Wells and Miami in the same season. Top-ranked Iga Swiatek did it a year ago. She withdrew from Miami this time because of a

rib injury.

So far in Rybakina's career, 13 of her 18 semifinal appearances have come on hard courts. She will face No. 3 Jessica Pegula or No. 27 Anastasia Potapova for a berth in the final.

Trevisan reached the French Open semifinals in 2022.

In fourth-round men's action Tuesday, Taylor Fritz and Jannik Sinner beat seeded opponents in straight sets.



Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan returns to Martina Trevisan of Italy during the Miami Open tennis tournament, Tuesday, March 28, 2023, in Miami Gardens, Fla.

Associated Press

No. 9 Fritz compiled twice as many winners, 22, as unforced errors, 11, and only

dropped serve once during a 6-3, 6-4 victory over No. 7 Holger Rune. □

Analysis: This Hall of Fame class could be an all-time great

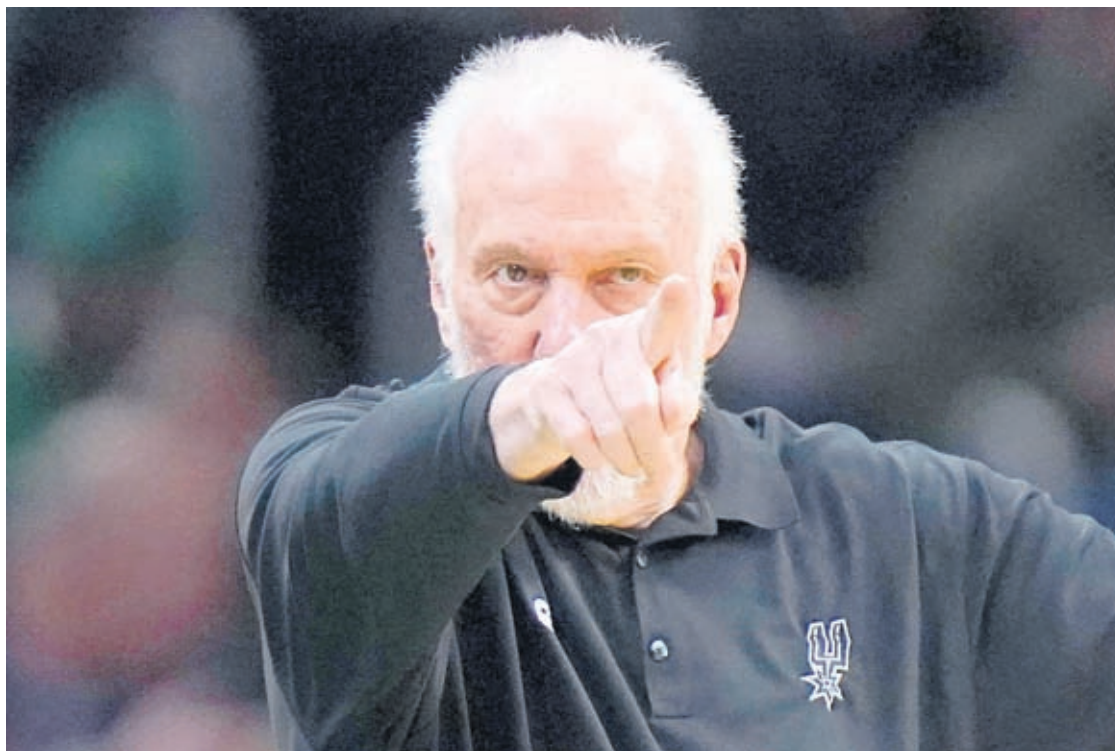
By **TIM REYNOLDS**
AP Basketball Writer

The Springfield Symphony Hall lists a capacity of 2,611. This is going to be a problem when the basketball world heads to western Massachusetts on Aug. 12. Act surprised on Saturday when the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame announces its class of enshrinees for 2023. Among the finalists: Dirk Nowitzki, Pau Gasol, Dwyane Wade, Tony Parker and Gregg Popovich. It's widely assumed that they'll enter the Hall this summer, in what will be a most star-studded event. "We might need a stadium for that one," Brooklyn coach Jacques Vaughn said.

He's not wrong. More than 2,611 people will want to go to this. Probably more than 261,111 people will want to go to this.

It was never a question that the biggest names — the Nowitzki, Gasol, Wade, Parker group — would get into the Hall.

The question was about Popovich. Not if. But when. The NBA's all-time winningest coach, a five-time champion and the coach of the team that won Olympic gold at the Tokyo Games quietly rejected overtures from the Hall in the past. He wanted to see his best San Antonio players — Tim Duncan and Manu Ginobili among them — go into the Hall first. He



San Antonio Spurs head coach Gregg Popovich points from the bench in the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Boston Celtics, Sunday, March 26, 2023, in Boston.

Associated Press

also wanted to see some coaches he respected most, like Rudy Tomjanovich, finally get the call first. Besides, it's not like people will look at Popovich with more reverence or respect after he gets his orange jacket from the Hall and officially gets to be introduced as a Hall of Famer. "It will mean more to us as former coaches, former players, than to him I think," Vaughn said. "And that's not a slight at all. I think what he will enjoy is seeing his former players there, and people who he has touched in a tremendous way, families he's impacted for a long time because

of his knowledge and his ability to share his knowledge and his ability to care for people."

More than 300 people have either played for or coached under Popovich in his time with the Spurs and USA Basketball. Nowitzki had more than 200 teammates. Gasol is beloved by teammates on two continents. The Miami Heat will probably send their entire staff up to see Wade give his speech. Add up the numbers, and we're getting toward that magic 2,611 number really quickly. And that doesn't even include, you know, the enshrinees' families and

friends, along with the other living Hall of Famers.

Spoelstra will be coaching with USA Basketball this summer under head coach Steve Kerr at the Basketball World Cup, which takes them to the Philippines in August and September following warm-up games in Las Vegas, Spain and Abu Dhabi. They'll be in Las Vegas until a few days before the Hall enshrinement, then the American contingent will head to Spain for games against Spain and Slovenia. Can't imagine they'll be very well-attended, not with Gasol going into the Hall that same weekend, with Slovenia's Luka Doncic

probably going to pick being with Nowitzki over a pair of exhibitions, with Popovich set to be enshrined.

The Hall will give the enshrinees a number of tickets. It won't be enough for any of them. Popovich's guest list will be impossible to pare down, especially his innermost circle of confidants, who remain there even after they leave the Spurs.

Case in point: Utah coach Will Hardy. He left the Spurs to be an assistant in Boston under another former Spurs player and coach, Ime Udoka. But when Popovich was coaching the Olympic team, he picked some of the best and brightest to be alongside him, Kerr, Spoelstra, Mike Krzyzewski and others for the process of getting ready. Hardy made that list.

"I've talked about imposter syndrome some this year — maybe never higher than those moments when you're sitting in a room and it's Gregg Popovich, Steve Kerr, Erik Spoelstra, Jerry Colangelo, Jay Wright, Lloyd Pierce, Ime Udoka, Coach K is in the room," Hardy said. "And you're going, 'How am I sitting at this table right now?' In a lot of ways it makes no sense. I felt like I was in the greatest basketball grad school class of all time. You almost can't write fast enough in terms of taking notes and listening." □



Brooklyn Nets guard Ben Simmons plays during the first half of an NBA basketball game against the Phoenix Suns, Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2023, in New York.

Associated Press

Nets' Simmons won't play again this season because of back

NEW YORK (AP) — Ben Simmons won't play again this season because of a nerve injury in his back, ending his disappointing first full season with the Brooklyn Nets after just 42 games.

Simmons saw multiple specialists this week who determined that he should be shut down for the season because of a nerve impingement and begin a rehabilitation program. Coach Jacques Vaughn said Tuesday a full recovery was expected.

It's the second straight year that Simmons was unable to play because of a back injury. He had surgery in the offseason to repair a disk problem, but was bothered this season by a sore left knee before his back problems returned.

Simmons finishes with averages of 6.9 points, 6.3 rebounds and 6.1 assists. The No. 1 pick in the 2016 draft didn't play after the All-Star break in February. The 26-year-old had fallen out of the starting lineup

before that, unable to regain the form that earned his three All-Star selections in Philadelphia.

He was traded to the Nets last February after initially refusing to play for the 76ers in the 2021-22 season, citing mental health concerns. His back problems then surfaced as he worked to get himself prepared to play for the Nets.

Simmons is making \$35.4 million this season, and is due \$78.2 million more over the next two seasons. □